

## **The Big Dance** by [the\\_sinnamon\\_roll\\_writes](#)

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**Summary:**

Jim Hopper has his hands full with Jane

## The Big Dance

Jane Hopper.

It was official. Holding the birth certificate was a surreal experience, though far from a bad one. As he listened to Dr. Owens talk, somewhere in the back of his mind, Jim was considering ways to break the news to her. He could just see the look on her face when she read the document. The proof that she was alive. A chance for her to be allowed to act like normal children do. If anyone deserved it, it was El. She had endured things that no one should have to endure, especially at her age. Sure, he would have to give it a little time as the doctor said, but it wouldn't be like the past year, Hopper was set on that. Hell, he might not even wait a month.

How to tell her? Just show her the birth certificate? Take her out? Throw a small party for her? No, none of those. They would only serve to make Jane confused or anxious. She needed something semi-familiar. He would think of something soon enough.

Somehow it felt like a second chance. Another daughter. And there was no way in hell he would let go of that.

No matter how bullheaded and difficult Eleven could be, Hop was sure that this would work out. She had friends, and soon would be able to go to school or to the movies or dances with- wait. That was it.

"What about one night out?"

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When he got the go-ahead from the good doctor, Jim went straight to the little store where Joyce worked. Much to his disappointment, he found that she wasn't there. Oh well. He could figure out what he needed on his own.

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"Alright kid. I don't know how any of this stuff works so we're gonna

have to practice.” Hopper had just got home and spilled everything he got on the dining room table.

“Practice?” Jane had jumped at the sudden intrusion (Jim no longer made her lock the doors and she was having a difficult time adjusting to him just walking in without his special knock) and then stepped out from her room to look at what sort of ‘stuff’ he had gotten. She was surprised to see little colorful containers and three magazines with beautiful women on the covers. It took a moment for her to register what these little containers were- makeup. She recognized it now. Eight had used makeup in small containers just like that to decorate her face not so long ago.

“It means weep on trying ‘till we get better at it. I figure we still have a few more days. The two of us can work this out.”

“Why?”

“Well, I thought that you might’ve wanted to go to that winter ball thing or whatever it is. Did you want to?” Jim asked casually, pulling out a chair and sitting down. He kept a close eye out for her reaction.

El’s face lit up immediately. For once she actually looked like the kid that she was, that she deserved to be, instead of the hardened, overly alert girl that she had been raised to be. It did Hopper’s heart good to see that.

“Yes! I can go?”

“That’s why I got all this crap,” he replied with a smile. “Do you wanna mess around with it now?”

She nodded enthusiastically and walked over to sit down beside him. “Let’s try it.”

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An hour later they were still figuring out what went where and had a damp kitchen towel covered with makeup. Jim hadn’t been paying very close attention when he was shopping, and didn’t really have a clue what half of it even was. How thick should he put on the blush? Did the hairspray go in before or after styling? What the hell was eye

shadow and where did it go? God, he wished they came with instruction manuals.

“Okay Jane, we’ve got this. I’m gonna flip through these magazines again, I’m really hoping we missed something and one of them will have some sort of guide to putting makeup on.” He started scanning the pages more carefully. Even some vague descriptions of the makeup types would be helpful.

“Kali did my makeup. She didn’t show me how though. I think I can do mascara though.”

“Cool,” Jim said, half tuned out and flipping through the pages of magazines.

“She made it really dark. Bitchin’. Can we do that?”

“Well, that’s not exactly the ideal look for a school dance kid. Maybe we can give that a try over the next few weeks, okay?”

“Compromise?”

“Right, scoot over here. I think I’ve got an idea of how to do this. Stay there for just a second, I’ll be right back.

From the other room, Jane could hear him dialing a number and start to talk to someone on the phone.

“Hey Joyce, it’s me- no, everything’s fine, I just had to ask you some questions. Where exactly does eyeshadow go? In the magazines it looked like it’s just all around the eye, but I’ve never seen anyone actually do that.”

“Eyeshadow? What is this about?”

“I’m planning to let Jane go to this winter dance that’s coming up. I thought we could put some makeup on for fun, but this stuff is impossible.”

“Oh! Well, eyeshadow typically just goes on the eyelids. Less is more. Make sure you blend everything, and go light on the blush.”

“Light on the blush, blend, eyelids. Alright, and what about hair? I swear, it’s getting longer every minute.”

“It’s actually pretty short right now. You probably won’t be able to do anything fancy with it. I’d say just smooth it back then spray it down with some hairspray when you like how it looks.” Joyce could hear Jim’s exasperated sigh over the phone and smiled. “You’re having fun, aren’t you? Don’t worry, you’ll get it. Did you need help with anything else?”

“I don’t think so. She said she knows how to put on that eyelash stuff herself. We should be able to get it done from here.”

“Okay, I’m gonna be here, so give me a call if you need anything.”

“Yeah, alright. Thanks Joyce.”

Hanging up, Hopper took a deep breath, and walked back into the living room where Jane was still waiting.

“I’m pretty sure I’ve got this figured out now,” he said, sitting back down in front of her. “Light on the blush, blend it, eyeshadow goes on the eyelids. Here, let’s go ahead and start with the blush. It looks like we just put some on here-“ he picked up the small brush and started to dab some on both of her cheeks- “and then blend. Smile, so I know where to spread this.”

Eleven did as she was told. The brush tickled her cheek, but she waited patiently and resisted the urge to laugh.

“Alright,” Jim said, holding up a small hand mirror. “How does the blush look to you? Is it gonna work?”

She nodded. It wasn’t like she was an expert, but she felt like she looked better than normal. “I like it,” she said, then paused briefly. “I’m having fun.”

Hopper looked mildly surprised, then touched, and reached out to ruffle her curly hair. “Good. Now let’s take a crack at the rest of this stuff.”

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It was sweet to see how excited she was over a silly middle school dance. Silly, but heartwarming all the same. In the year that Jim had known her, he couldn't remember ever seeing her smile this much. The closest instance he could think of was when he first took her in and they had worked together to make the small house livable again.

It had taken them a couple of tries, but eventually they had managed to master the makeup that they had. Eleven had a hard time letting Jim touch her eyes, so she took over that with him directing her through it. Hopper took care of the rest of the face, and did her hair. For that he ended up just doing as Joyce had suggested and brushed it back. One little curl of hair refused to stay put, so he just let it hang loosely to the side of her forehead. He had to assure her many times that it looked just fine before she allowed him to come at her with a can of hairspray.

She the one dress she had that they had gotten the first time they went on a shopping trip together. He wasn't able to take her out very often, so he had let her wander through the isles and pick out a few outfits and some small toys. Most of what she chose was large, loose clothing that was more focused on comfort rather than style. She did pick out the one pretty dress though, perhaps remembering the one Mike had given her.

All in all, they were able to put together a reasonable ensemble for a middle school dance.

The drive to the dance was mostly quiet. Eleven kept trying to catch glimpses of her reflection in the window and the side view mirrors. Whenever she got a look she would reach up and touch her cheek or around her eyes.

"Hey, easy with that. You're gonna wipe it all off before we even get there."

"Are we close?"

"Mhm. We're just a couple blocks away," Hopper replied. "You excited?"

"Yes. Mike will be there, right?"

“Yup. I’m sure he’s already waiting for you. I think it started like, ten minutes ago.” They pulled up and parked on the sidewalk in front of the school. “Alright, before you go in, I’ve got one rule for you. Don’t leave the dance, okay? I’ll keep a radio on me, if you want to come home early, just step outside, find me, and wait for me there.”

“Okay. I can do that.”

“Otherwise, I think Joyce said this thing is done at ten, so I’ll be here to pick you up then.”

“I know,” Jane said patiently. She knew he was just taking care of her, but she was anxious to go inside and find out exactly what a dance was. She had unbuckled herself and was starting to fidget with the door handle, slowly scooting over to the edge of the seat. “Can I go inside?”

“Okay. Go on in. And have fun kid.” He had to chuckle at how fast she swung open the door and rushed into the school. It took him a moment to start his truck back up and start to roll forward. She’d be fine.

He was surprised, however, that he hadn’t seen another parent in a similar state of mind anywhere. He’d had a hunch that she would be hanging around somewhere. When he didn’t see her up front, he figured that he should double check the rest of the perimeter, just to be sure.

He had checked three sides, and was just glancing down the last, and darkest, side when he noticed someone standing alone just outside of a car. Right away, he knew who it was. And he knew why she was there. Joyce.

“Hey.”

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Ten o’clock came, and Hopper and Joyce waited outside along with all the other parents. She had cheered up a little when Jim told her about Jane, and they’d both discussed what the future might hold for her.

"You're gonna tell her tonight?" Joyce asked as they watched the flood of children exiting the school.

"Yeah. I've got the certificate in here," he confirmed, patting one of the pockets in his pants. "When we get home, I'm thinkin' we'll have some ice cream or waffles or something and then I'll give her the news."

"Oh, she'll love that. There they are! Oh Hop, she looks so pretty. You did a good job. Hi sweetie!" Joyce beamed as Eleven and Will peeled away from the crowd to walk towards them. Seeing Joyce's smile, El let herself be pulled into a warm hug. "You look beautiful honey."

"Thank you."

"Did you two have fun?" Jim chimed in, looking down at the two children fondly.

They both nodded enthusiastically. "I got asked to dance, mom!" Will looked incredibly proud of himself. "It was so cool!"

Jane wandered over to where Hopper stood and looked up at him. "You ready to head home kid?"

When she nodded, he opened the passenger door for her and waited for her to climb in before closing it and walking around to the driver's side. They both waved goodbye to the Byers, and then were off. "So you did have a good time? Did you dance with the Wheeler kid?"

"Mike. Yes." Something was off about her expression, and Hopper picked up on it immediately.

"What'd he do? Did he try anything inappropriate?"

Eleven looked slightly confused at that. "Inappropriate? What would be inappropriate?"

"Well- conversation for a different time. I mean, did he do anything that made you uncomfortable?"



“No. I just didn’t know if you... liked him.”

“Oh. Oh!” Jim laughed when he realized what she meant. “You were worried I wouldn’t approve?”

“Yes. I heard you yelling at each other.” She wasn’t looking at Hopper, and truth be told, he wasn’t 100% dialed in on what was bothering her.

But this was supposed to be her night, so he took a stab at fixing whatever it was that was bothering her. “El, as long as you’re happy and he hasn’t done anything stupid to hurt you, I’m fine with him.”

“Promise?”

“Yeah, I promise.”

She perked up after that. When they got home, she hurried in ahead of him and in towards her room.

“Wait! Kid, come back here, there’s somethin’ I needed to talk with you about. No, don’t look so anxious, it’s nothing bad,” he assured. “Here, come sit down and have a little ice cream with me.”

After they settled on portions (“*no*, you cannot have that much, I said a little!”), they sat at the table together and Jim listened to her tell him about the dance. From the way she described it, it had been the kind of night every little girl dreams of. Spending time with friends, laughing at jokes, slow dancing with someone special. She didn’t quite have all the words to explain what she had felt, but she was animated enough that Jim understood.

As they were finishing up the treat and Jane was winding down with her tales, Hopper decided it was time. “Well, I’m glad you had fun. I’ve got somethin’ for you to check out now. I’ve been trying to think of some clever reveal, but theatrics have never been my strong suit.” While Eleven watched, he pulled out the opened envelope and slid it across the table to her.

Puzzled, she picked it up, pulled the sheet of paper out, and unfolded it. Her mouth moved silently as she read along to herself. It was clear when she finished, because her mouth remained open and she looked

up to meet Hopper's smile with wide eyes. "W-what does this mean?"

"This means you don't have to hide anymore. We are going to keep a low profile for a while though," he warned. "We aren't doing anything crazy. But you'll be able to start school, and go over to other kids' houses, play outside. You don't have to stare at a tv all day for entertainment."

"I'll be like the others?"

"That's right. We're gonna be Norman Rockwell here."

"Who?"

"Rockwell was this guy who pretty much set the tone for what American families should look like. Mom, dad, two kids living in the suburbs. A plain, normal guy. We won't actually have all of that, but we can still be a family."

Jane was wearing her sweet smile that lent a twinkle to her eyes. "So... you're my papa now?"

"How about we just go with 'dad'? I like to think I'm not old enough to be someone's papa."

"Dad. Daaad." She played around with the word, testing it out. "Dad. It works. You're not like papa."

"I'm glad to hear that. He wasn't a good guy. Right now though, I have to be the bad guy. Go on and get ready for bed. It's past your bedtime and you're lookin' pretty tired. We can talk about this some more in the morning, alright?"

"Yes." She went to the bathroom to brush her teeth without complaint for once. He couldn't be totally sure if that meant she was upset that she had to go to bed or is she was just happy enough to not put up a fight. Hopefully the latter.

As she went through the nightly routine (brushing teeth, washing up, putting on pajamas, getting a cup of water for her small bedside stand), Jim wandered about the living room and kitchen, picking up glasses and tidying up small toys he had gotten her as he went along.

At some point in the future he might have to talk to her about picking up after herself. It had never been too much of a problem before; she was generally a pretty neat kid. But even the most straight-laced of children made messes every now and then.

“Dad?”

Broken out of his thoughts, Hopper turned around to see Jane standing in the doorway to the hall. She was in her pjs, and appeared to be ready for a good nights sleep. “What’s up kid?”

“I’m ready for bed now. Could we read?”

It was hard to say no to her small smile, so he nodded and followed her into her small room. She climbed into bed and under the covers, and Jim took his usual seat in the chair beside her. He picked up the book they’d been working on from the bedside table and flipped open to the last page he’d dog-eared. Taking a deep breath, he began reading out loud, angling the book so she could read along with him. After a couple pages, they switched, and Eleven read while Hopper followed, correcting her as needed. They went on like that, back and forth, until they finished the chapter. Jim was the last one reading, and he noticed her starting to doze off. By the time he was finished, she looked totally konked out. He dog-eared the corner to mark the end of the chapter, but made a mental note that they would most likely need to go over the last bits of that chapter.

Taking great care to be quiet, Jim stood up and looked down at the sleeping child. Brushing some stray locks of hair off of her face, Jim leaned down and pulled the covers up over her shoulders, rubbing her back gently. “Goodnight kid,” he whispered, unsure if she could actually hear him, “I’ll see you in the morning.”

“Dad?”

He hadn’t been expecting a reply. “Hm?”

“Am I your new Sarah?”

That caught him off guard, although he knew it shouldn’t have. “No, you aren’t my new Sarah.”

“Oh... Okay.”

As soon as it had left his mouth, Hop had realized how that might've sounded, and El's answer let him know how she took it. “You- you're not my new Sarah because you're my new Jane. Sarah has been gone for a long time. You're not a replacement, El. You're my girl. I know I'm not really good with words, but El, you mean a lot to me. Not because of Sarah, or in spite of her, but because you're you.” He ran his fingers through his hair, frustrated. “I don't think I'm getting my point across here-”

Eleven cut him off by reaching out and catching his hand, tugging it twice. “I understand. You're dad because you aren't papa. I'm Jane, because I'm not Sarah.”

Smiling, Jim nodded down at her and squeezed her hand gently. “Right. Okay, time for bed,” he added softly when she yawned.

She nodded and closed her eyes. She'd had a busy day, and it was late. She was asleep before Hopper made it out of the room.

Walking silently out the door and closing it behind him, Hopper took a deep breath and wandered down to his room with every intention of crawling into his bed. He stopped himself before he did stopping to get out of his work clothes. As he kicked off his shoes and started to take off his clothes to change, it hit him just how tired he was. He'd had a busy day too. He only pulled on a clean pair of boxers and a loose tee-shirt before collapsing into bed. A busy day indeed. But absolutely worth it.